

Please add the following new claims:

22. A composite material for forming a liquid-retaining layer in a hygiene article or a medical product, comprising:

a first layer of substantially continuous staple fibers with a diameter of 15 to 35 μm ;

a second film layer; and

a third layer of microfibers with a diameter of less than 10 μm , said third layer being provided on the full surface of the side of said first layer remote from said second film layer, said third layer three- dimensionally penetrates the surface structure of said first layer in such a way that the mean spacing D' between said third layer and second film layer is less than the thickness D_{sp} of said first layer sandwiched in between.

23. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the retention or adhesion force of a hook material relative to the outside of the composite material, formed by said third layer, is less than 20 cN/25 mm.

24. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the retention or adhesion force of a hook material relative to the outside of the composite material, formed by said third layer, is less than 10 cN/25 mm.

25. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the retention or adhesion force of a hook material relative to the outside of the composite material, formed by said third layer, is less than 5 cN/25 mm.

26. The composite material of claim 22, characterized in that the film layer also penetrates

the three-dimensional surface structure of the staple fiber layer.

27. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the weight per unit of surface area of the composite material is 20 to 45 g/m².

28. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the weight per unit of surface area of the composite material is 25 to 40 g/m².

29. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the weight per unit of surface area of the composite material is 30 to 35 g/m².

30. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the weight per unit of surface area of said third layer is 3 to 10 g/m².

31. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the weight per unit of surface area of said third layer is 4 to 6 g/m².

32. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the weight per unit of surface area of said first layer is 15 to 25 g/m².

33. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the weight per unit of surface area of said first layer is 18 to 22 g/m².

34. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the thickness of said second film layer is 9 to 20 μm.

35. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the thickness of said second film layer is 12 to 17 μm.

36. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the tear strength of the composite material is at least 15 N/25 mm.

37. The composite material of claim 22, wherein the tear strength of the composite

material is at least 18 N/25 mm.

38. The composite material of claim 22, wherein said second film layer is breathable but liquid-proof, so that the composite material is likewise breathable but liquid-proof.

39. The composite material of claim 38, wherein said second film layer is permeable to water vapor through the process of chemisorption.

40. The composite material of claim 38, wherein said second film layer has micropores for admitting water vapor.

B4
cont.
41. The composite material of claim 40, wherein said micropores have a diameter of 0.2 to 10 μm .

42. The composite material of claim 22, wherein at least said second film layer has macropores in at least some portions.

43. The composite material of claim 42, wherein said first and third layers also have macropores, in such a way that said macropores of said first and third layer composite and said macropores of said second film layer form openings that extend through the composite material.

44. Use of a composite material of claim 22 as a liquid-retaining layer in a disposable hygiene article.

45. The use of claim 44, wherein the hygiene article is one of: a diaper, training pants, a sanitary napkin, a panty liner, and an incontinence shield.

46. The use of claim 44, wherein said composite material is used as a backing sheet.

47. The use of claim 46, wherein said third layer is disposed on the outside of the backing sheet.